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A STUDY OF THE PLAYGROUND IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Department of Christian Education  
Asbury Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Religious Education

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by  
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May 1952

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Summertime is usually a trouble time for parents, neighbors and local authorities. There have been many methods devised to solve the problem created by "vacation time." Among these are the civic-sponsored playground programs in many large cities and small communities, the 4H clubs in rural communities, state and civic public parks, and the Vacation Bible School in operation for two, three, and four week periods. These have partially contributed to the alleviation of these difficulties, but even yet there are greater possibilities in the physical, mental and spiritual development of boys and girls, which can be utilized and developed during the summer months.

#### 1. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to examine the supervised playground program as a desirable factor in religious education; (2) to be able to present the present status of the playground program in religious education; (3) to submit a proposed playground program for the local church.

Importance of the study. There is the possibility of a broader program which has all the advantages of the agencies mentioned, yet has a greater influence upon the spiri-

tual and moral development of the child. Such a program is to be found in the church-sponsored playground movement. The church has a great opportunity if it can but realize the potentialities inherent in a properly supervised program of recreation in relation to its total religious education program. Powell says that too often recreation is thought of only as something which keeps the boy out of mischief, but this does not fully express the problem.<sup>1</sup> The church which overlooks the possibilities of a playground program misses the opportunity for something positively constructive in meeting the spiritual and moral needs of its children.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Playground. Commonly recognized as a play area for children's use. Butler states that the children's playground is an outdoor area which provides opportunities for children, primarily between the ages of five and fifteen, to take part in a variety of fundamental and enjoyable play activities.<sup>2</sup> A piece of ground used for recreation, especially by children under supervision.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warren T. Powell, Recreation in Church and Community (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1938), p. 22

<sup>2</sup> George D. Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1938), p. 9

<sup>3</sup> Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition, unabridged: Springfield, Mass.: G. and G. Merriam Co., 1934).

Play. The word "play" is used to designate that type of free behavior or experience, whether active or passive, that is in accord with pleasurable emotions. Richardson states the chief characteristics of play to be that it is joyful, interesting, and that it involves harmony between the individual and his environment. It makes use of both inherited and acquired interests. Among children, particularly, it is largely imitative, and it changes with the changing capacities and needs of developing life.<sup>4</sup>

Religious education. For the purpose of this study, religious education may be stated in the following terms. It seeks to foster in the pupil (1) a consciousness of God as a reality in human experience; (2) a sense of personal relationship to Him; (3) an understanding and appreciation of the life and teachings of Jesus so that he may be lead to experience Him as Savior and Lord; (4) loyalty to Jesus Christ so that it will manifest itself in daily life and conduct; (5) a progressive and continuous development of Christ-like character; (6) to develop the ability and desire to participate in the life and work of the church; (7) knowledge, understanding

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<sup>4</sup> Norman E. Richardson, The Church at Play (Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1922), p. 56

and love of the Bible. Religious education has for its sublime object, fitting men to live in perfect harmony with the will of God.<sup>5</sup>

### III. PROCEDURE OF RESEARCH

During the summer of 1951, first hand experience was gained by the writer as playground director at Marion, Ohio. With this as a basis in experience, extensive and critical reading was done to guide in the evaluation of the playground as an agency of religious education.

<sup>5</sup> James DeForest Murch, Christian Education and the Local Church (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1943), p. 128

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLAYGROUND AS A DESIRABLE FACTOR IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The call for a program of leisure-time activities supervised by the church is based upon some of the most significant facts in modern civilization.<sup>1</sup> Boys and girls in every type of home and environment are influenced by the effect of this modern mechanistic age. As never before, their activities and interests need to be guided, especially during the summer vacation months. There are just two ways of using leisure time -- properly and improperly. Children are to be taught the difference between an improper use of marginal time and a positive, constructive use by which their activities will contribute to their own welfare and that of society.<sup>2</sup>

Need for supervised play. Children need places to play. Increasingly unavailable to them are the open fields, woods and streams where their grandparents roamed at will. Streets are crowded and full of traffic and even empty lots cannot be found in many neighborhoods. When there is no

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<sup>1</sup> Norman E. Richardson, The Church at Play (Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1922), p. 28

<sup>2</sup> Warren T. Powell, Recreation in Church and Community (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1938), p. 13

place to play and there is no supervision, the hours become monotonous. Children cannot be left to themselves to discover and make use of suitable forms of recreation.<sup>3</sup>

Clifford R. Shaw, of the Chicago Institute of Juvenile Research states that the unsupervised play group is the medium through which a large proportion of delinquents are initiated and through which delinquency is transmitted from older to younger generations. Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Sing Sing prison bears further witness to the effectiveness of supervision of leisure time. In speaking of more than 40,000 men whom he has known, more or less intimately as inmates of the various penal institutions with which he has been connected, he declares that ninety-seven percent of these were at no time ever associated with well-regulated juvenile groups or supervised recreation centers. Supervision of play-time activities does not guarantee to make good citizens out of every individual thus supervised, but it has been shown to be of great aid in preventing delinquency.<sup>4</sup>

In some areas there are suitable areas for play but no supervision. Gulick states that children need supervision for the happiest and most wholesome play. He further states

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<sup>3</sup> Richardson, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 36

An unsupervised playground is nominally free; in reality it is controlled by the strongest and most vicious element in the crowd. It is a dangerous place for small children; it can be converted from a direct source of evil to a source of benefit by having someone put in authority, who will see that the ground is used for the purpose for which it was intended...No large company of people can be free without control of this kind.<sup>5</sup>

It is not merely play that our cities and our children need. They need the kind of play that makes for relationships between individuals which conform to adult ideals of wholesome moral and ethical life.<sup>6</sup>

Community recreation program. Public and private agencies, the home, the school, the church and other institutions are promoting programs and the National Recreation Association serves as a clearing house for these programs. Today (1938) almost two million children and adults take advantage of public recreational activities, and millions of dollars are spent each year to provide these advantages.<sup>7</sup>

There are two types of programs for promoting recreation and amusements in both large and small communities. The first of these is commercialized amusements, primarily for financial profit. These agencies were the first to

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<sup>5</sup> Luther Halsey Gulick, M.D., A Philosophy of Play (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 233

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 245

<sup>7</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 16



recognize the increased need for recreation in the modern day. Among these are the motion picture, dance hall, pool hall, boxing and professional baseball. Some of these are harmful to health, others to morals, some injure personality, while they all stifle the spiritual life.<sup>8</sup>

The other type of program is the socialized program of recreation. This is sponsored by agencies desiring to serve youth that provide a recreational program, such as the Young Men's Christian Association, and schools and colleges. Much of such programs can be commended by the churches but there are usually certain features that are questionable for church members and more especially by professing Christians. Often among the activities are dancing and Sunday baseball games.

Both of these programs stop short of the best in character building, moral training and spiritual leadership.<sup>9</sup> They cannot be trusted to provide the type of recreation needed by our children. The church needs to spread its influence to control commercialized and socialized amusements; to teach and preach the highest Christian ideals and to promote a program of evangelism so that the children will not participate in the questionable. The church needs to build a program so

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<sup>8</sup> T. B. Maston, A Handbook for Church Recreation Leaders (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1937), p. 31

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 32

attractive that it will largely satisfy the play urge of children.<sup>10</sup>

Responsibility of the church. It is still quite true that there are many influential members of churches who do not yet feel that play has any proper place in the institution. Maston in his Handbook for Church Recreation Leaders states:

During most of the history of Christianity, churches and church leaders have condemned most forms of recreation and have opposed any type of recreation program under church auspices. Play has been considered an agent of the devil and an enemy of the soul.<sup>11</sup>

Even in the present day some churches are indifferent; some provide a program without proper leadership while others have well-trained recreation leaders with the backing of the church but the aim has been misdirected -- recreation for the sake of recreation alone. Powell says

The ministry of the church must be physical, mental and social as well as spiritual if the institution is to contribute to well-rounded personal development. Play is the expression of the whole life of the individual.<sup>12</sup>

The question arises as to what extent the church should go in providing a supervised program of play and what should this program contribute to religious education?

Recreation program of the church. The church has a

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 33

<sup>11</sup> Maston, op. cit., p. 27

<sup>12</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 24

special opportunity in the summer months to guide the lives of boys and girls. A survey should be made of the community to see how many children are actually in the community and who they are. Does the community provide a playground program or do the Scouts carry on a day-camp program? What are the children doing during the summer months and what kind of opportunities do they need which the church is equipped to give? In what manner should the church plan to serve its children during the summer? In answer to this last question, Bogardus suggests certain accepted activities, such as:

1. Vacation Church School.
2. Family experiences in the summer.
3. Picnics, hikes and other outings.
4. Church day camps.
5. Play and story hours.<sup>13</sup>

A church recreation program must be built on the basic interests of children and also meet the needs of the various age groups. A general objective of recreational activities is that they lead to social sensitiveness, responsibility and cooperativeness.<sup>14</sup> There are also various objectives for a Christian recreation program. Harold Lewis and Glen Sanbery in an article "Recreation in Our Church" name seven objectives for the church's recreational program:

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<sup>13</sup> LaDonna Bogardus, "When Summer Comes," Child Guidance in Christian Living, March, 1952

<sup>14</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 54

1. It must be creative recreation, not wreck-reation.
2. It must develop interest, attitudes and appreciations more than just games, crafts, athletics and so on.
3. It must be cooperative, not competitive.
4. It must develop personality, character, and wider horizons.
5. It must develop self-expression and emotional outlets.
6. It must give a feeling of security, of belonging to a group.
7. It must break down barriers between individuals.<sup>15</sup>

James McGiffin in Recreation and Life cites these standards of a Christian recreation program. He asks:

Does it --

1. Enlist our energetic powers of selection?
2. Provide for a continuous widening of our interests?
3. Make for a fulfillment type of experience rather than an escape experience?
4. Build up inner resources?
5. Require outside stimulation to get us started?
6. Not violate other values of life, though it makes no contribution?
7. Give a kinship with materials?
8. Foster and develop skills?
9. Provide for rhythmic and aesthetic interests?
10. Develop wholesome social contacts?
11. Bring genuine fun, not mere sophistication?<sup>16</sup>

The Kentucky State Youth Conference, meeting in 1937, recognized and recommended the place of wholesome, high type recreation in the church program and submitted the following test for determining whether recreation be good:

1. Does it refresh?
2. Does it re-create?

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<sup>15</sup> Harold Lewis and Glen Sanbery, "Recreation in Our Church," Highroad, November, 1947

<sup>16</sup> James McGiffin, Recreation and Life (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 6,7

3. Does it lift?
4. Does it help others?
5. Is there purpose to it?
6. Is it constructive?
7. Does it develop cooperation?
8. Does it develop appreciation?
9. What if it were universalized?<sup>17</sup>

Playing with children is important in influencing their Christian character. The recreation program of the week offers the church an excellent opportunity for putting into practice through good sportsmanship in games, the Christian principles learned on Sunday.<sup>18</sup> There are many activities through which the play leader can instruct in character education. Tully in his chapter on "Play and Recreation" states that honesty is best taught in acts calling for honesty, truth in situations calling for truth, love in acts calling for love, etc.<sup>19</sup> In the natural environment of play and recreation the play leader has many opportunities to give Christian instruction. Tully further states that there are many activities through which the play leader can instruct in character education and suggests the following:

1. Games, contests, sports, hobbies, and so on. Moral choices have to be made every instant in games and contests. At the time of these choices is the time to be ready for instruction, so the play leader should have

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<sup>17</sup> Kentucky State Youth Conference, "Recreation," Christian Youth Building a New World, April 23-25, 1937

<sup>18</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 25

<sup>19</sup> Bob Tully, "Play and Recreation." Philip H. Lotz, editor, Orientation in Religious Education (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 174

in mind the following specific steps: (a) Know the learnings that are desired and have a chance to be taught in that activity. (b) Praise -- commend -- the desirable response. (c) Condemn the undesirable response. (d) Point out the consequence of the act. (e) Lift the eyes of the participant to the far-reaching consequences of the act.

2. Storytelling and dramatics. The spoken word is an excellent method of influencing behavior.

3. Personal counseling. Perhaps no other individual has as much opportunity for this type of instruction as the play leader. He has entrance into conversation because of the universality of play and the naturalness of play fellowship.<sup>20</sup>

Vacation Church School. Vacation Church Schools held in many churches, while predominantly for religious teaching and training, have included considerable play and recreation. As stated by Ida Binger Hubbard in Child Guidance in Christian Living:

A two week vacation church school, with ten sessions of two and one-half hours means not less than twenty-five hours of guided experiences in Christian living for boys and girls. A three week school means thirty-seven and one-half hours and a four week school means fifty hours. The day by day sessions of Vacation Church school provide for continuous learning and doing.<sup>21</sup>

Some church school leaders are capitalizing on emerging interests by meeting with the boys and girls a day each week for the remainder of the summer.

Church Sponsored Playground Program. The playground

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 175

<sup>21</sup> Ida Binger Hubbard, "More Time for Christian Nurture Through Vacation Church School," Child Guidance in Christian Living, April, 1952

has become widely recognized as an essential community feature. Educators, judges, church leaders, and high government officials testify to the value of playgrounds and their contribution to city, town and village life. George Butler, of the National Recreation Association states:

On the playground there arise continually situations which afford intelligent leaders an opportunity to guide children and youth in the development of high ideals and proper conduct. Much emphasis has been laid upon the playground as a factor in the reduction of delinquency. True as this is, the potentiality of the playground as a positive force in the formation of character and in the development of leadership qualities is of still greater importance.<sup>22</sup>

Butler gives the following objectives for playgrounds in general:

1. The playground provides opportunities for children to have fun -- to enjoy themselves completely.
2. The playground contributes to the safety of children, especially in cities.
3. The opportunity and incentive which the playground affords for long periods of varied activity in the sunlight and open air are of great health value to children, especially in the crowded sections of our cities.<sup>23</sup>

Programs particularly for school ages need to be day by day, so as to give a sense of security and feeling of belonging; under able leadership, so that the child can progress through worthwhile experiences; and centered in group

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<sup>22</sup> George D. Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1938), p. 2

<sup>23</sup> Loc. cit.

living so that the child can learn how to become a member of a democratic society.<sup>24</sup>

The Vacation Church School is meeting the needs of boys and girls to a limited extent. The church sponsored playground program can be adapted as an extension of the church school, making it an all day program extending through the entire summer vacation period. The usual recreation program can be given a spiritual emphasis with an hour each day for Bible study, Scripture memorization, singing gospel choruses and hymns and other methods for direct religious teaching and training. As has been recognized, a knowledge of religious and moral principles can be transmitted, along with a direct program of evangelism, in the church school playground program.

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<sup>24</sup> Recreation, April, 1949. From the 1947 Annual Report, by permission of the Play Schools Association, New York.



## CHAPTER III

### PRESENT STATUS OF THE PLAYGROUND

In making a survey of the present status of the playground program in the United States, attention was given to the civic-sponsored program, as well as that of the Salvation Army and the church.

#### I. CIVIC-SPONSORED PLAYGROUND PROGRAM

History to present. Playgrounds were established even before 1900 and in order to meet the need for expansion, a group met in 1906 to organize a national body, to help towns and cities develop adequate playground systems and to create public sentiment for their extension and support.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this organization, called The Playground Association of America, as stated in its constitution, was to collect and distribute knowledge of and promote interest in playgrounds throughout the country, to seek to further the establishment of playgrounds and athletic fields in all communities and directed play in connection with the schools.<sup>2</sup> A monthly magazine, The Playground, was begun and among the

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<sup>1</sup> George D. Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1949), p. 65

<sup>2</sup> "Twenty-Five Years of Prophetic Achievement," The Journal of the National Education Association, May, 1931

functions of the Association was the employment of field workers who were sent from city to city meeting with committees and public officials, exchanging experiences and assisting in the establishment of playgrounds and recreation centers; the establishment of a central clearing house; the organization of annual play congresses; and the preparation of a Normal Course in Play, which was widely used by schools and colleges in the training of play leaders.<sup>3</sup> Years later the name was changed to the National Recreation Association, which not only includes the playground movement, but all phases of recreation in dealing with young people and adults.

According to the Park and Recreation Yearbook, published by the National Recreation Association, the last study of public recreation which was made in 1951, revealed a total of 1,594 cities which reported 14,747 playgrounds under leadership.<sup>4</sup>

Principle cities. Most of the large cities of America have a city-wide playground program. George Butler<sup>5</sup> mentions several of these in his book, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, in relation to their emphasis

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<sup>3</sup>Butler, op. cit., p. 66

<sup>4</sup>Personal correspondence of the Author, letter from Virginia Musselman, Correspondence and Consultation Bureau, National Recreation Association, May 7, 1952

<sup>5</sup>George D. Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1938), p. 162 ff

in program planning. Baltimore, Maryland, is one of the few cities in which the younger children are given so much consideration on the playground. There is a wide variety of activities for children under ten years of age. This city also emphasizes health activities and includes them in its daily program. In Reading, Pennsylvania, the city emphasizes intra-playground activities rather than inter-playground activities, which are so prominent in many city-wide programs. These programs are strictly summer programs while spring programs are emphasized in Spokane, Washington, Tacoma, Washington, and Kenosha, Washington. Louisville, Kentucky, and Berkeley, California, plan a fall program of great interest, while Memphis, Tennessee, and Chicago, Illinois, sponsor a Year-Round program. San Francisco, California, instead of putting the emphasis on a weekly or seasonal program, place it upon the daily program, which continues from 8:30 a.m. until 10:00 p.m., with various activities for all ages at designated hours.

Recreation a factor in city planning. Before 1900, little thought was given to the acquisition of public open spaces according to a city-wide plan. Individual parks and play areas were acquired by purchase, gift or otherwise because they met some neighborhood or local need. However, today recreation spaces are recognized as a major factor to

be considered in the city along with zoning, streets, public utilities and building sites. The general requirements for parks and recreational areas are included as a part of a city's master plan.<sup>6</sup>

There are many different types of recreation areas in a city, such as the play lot or block playground, the neighborhood playground, the playfield, the large park, reservation and special areas such as the municipal golf course, camp, swimming pool, athletic field and stadium.

Program planning. In the small city the supervisor of playgrounds, who is employed on a seasonal basis, recruits, organizes and trains the playground staff; maps out the general program and supervises the work of all the playgrounds.

In the large city the executive is unable to personally supervise the program at all the centers. The city is divided into geographical districts and one general supervisor is assigned to each. He serves approximately ten playgrounds, visiting each one frequently to observe the work done, help directors with programs, special problems and reports and to arrange for inter-playground and city-wide projects.

The executive outlines the general plan for the entire city. He provides a framework upon which individual play-

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<sup>6</sup> Butler, op. cit., pp. 149,150

ground programs are built, each of them being designed to meet the special interests and needs of the neighborhood served. The instructions governing programs and program planning issued to all workers at the beginning of the playground season usually indicate the chief objectives of the program and the general methods of attaining them.<sup>7</sup>

Aim. Butler states that the functions of the playground program are to afford fun, safety and development of sportsmanship and cooperation, as well as the development of healthy bodies and physical vigor gained by spending hours in the air and sunlight in varied forms of active play. He further states:

Well-equipped, ample and properly located playgrounds under competent leadership, encourage wholesome, constructive activity and thereby tend to reduce juvenile delinquency. They also afford centers for family and neighborhood play.<sup>8</sup>

## II. THE SALVATION ARMY

History to the present. The Salvation Army has long promoted youth activities, as have many of the churches, for the purpose of holding the interest of boys and girls. However, in the spring of 1946 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a definite

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 270-273

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 267

playground program was started. This was included in the Army's total recreational program along with Recreation Centers, and camps as well as playgrounds. There was no fund of experience on which the Army could draw but it looked to the YMCA, the Boys' Clubs and the settlements for proved philosophies governing leadership, planning and policies. No definite program or outline of procedure had been worked out, but only the idea that it would be a program for both sexes and it would have a positive Christian emphasis. The total program at present in the Pennsylvania area includes thirteen centers, two playgrounds and a summer camp. Arthur Henderson, the Director of Recreation in this area, states that their efforts have been justified and the results in the number of souls won has more than compensated for the cost of the program to the Salvation Army in this area.<sup>9</sup>

With the exception of one Community Center, all of the programs thus far organized have been under and a part of the church or "Corps" program. The pastor or "Corps Officer" is responsible for the administration of the program.

Other programs all over America are being promoted by the Salvation Army, but this is the most highly organized and developed large scale religious program. In the southwest Ohio Division, Marion has pioneered the summer playground

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<sup>9</sup> Personal Correspondence of the Author, letter from Arthur Henderson, December 7, 1951

program, patterning its schedule and program after the Philadelphia set-up.

Program organization. The first step in the development of the Salvation Army Youth Community program was a systematic and detailed survey of the communities where a program had been considered. This survey was for the purpose of finding other agencies doing a similar job, determining over-all needs of the community, the number of children in the area, general home conditions and the religious affiliation of the families.

The second step was the adaptation of the building which had been secured for the program for its most advantageous use. This was done by alterations, securing additional space for playgrounds and arranging for the use of outside facilities such as ball diamonds, etc.

The third step in organization was locating, hiring, and training the staff for various jobs. Director Henderson states that this is the most difficult problem in the total scope of the organization. He says that it has been almost impossible to find people who are definite Christians and yet have had experience in directing recreational activities.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Arthur Henderson, Meeting Community Needs Through a Corps-Community Program. Speech before National Workers Conference.

Sources of such personnel are religious colleges, seminaries, YMCA's, church groups, and the National Recreation Association.

An adequate record is kept on all those who participate in the program. A membership application form which gives necessary information and family background is filled out by each child, and then is transferred to a file card. A system of fees which is kept at a minimum is maintained only for the purpose of control. The fee is so low as not to exclude anyone from membership. The classification of the National Recreation Association has been used as a basis for age grouping.<sup>11</sup>

Aim. The activities of the youth program are but the means to an ultimate end -- that of winning souls for Christ. The over-all objectives of the Salvation Army Recreational program are:

1. Recreational objectives.
  - a. To provide opportunities for learning basic skills in games and sports, arts and crafts.
  - b. To present a program of worthwhile activities with the necessary carry-over interests for all ages.
  - c. To provide adequate opportunities for self-expression.
2. Social Objectives.
  - a. To present a challenge to a higher level of living through activities such as Home Economics, Nutrition, Sewing, Cooking and Home Nursing classes.
  - b. To lead the individual to be community con-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 5



- scious, to realize his social responsibility and to be sincerely co-operative in group, club or community enterprises.
- c. To organize activities that will interest parents and adults of the community.
  - d. To provide follow-up on disciplinary and referral cases by home visitation.
3. Educational objectives.
- a. To present a program of activities designed to aid in selection of a vocation.
  - b. To provide opportunities for acquisition of knowledge and skills through a well-balanced program of worth-while activities.
4. Spiritual objectives.
- a. To emphasize through all the activities the primary purpose of the program.
  - b. To provide ample opportunities for instruction, guidance and study in order that those who have made a definite decision may be encouraged to grow in grace.
  - c. To provide a channel through which the un-churched individual or family may be influenced to participate in the spiritual activities of the Corps.<sup>12</sup>

Arthur Henderson states that the only conceivable purpose for a Salvation Army youth program is the salvation of souls. He further says that it should not be his job as a Christian leader in a religious organization to spend his days merely running athletic leagues, teaching craft classes, developing champions or producing plays. This task should be accepted for the purpose of leading people to Christ. If any program of the Christian church or the Salvation Army fails in accomplishing this as the end result of its efforts, then the church or the Army has no reason for accepting or promoting that activity.<sup>13</sup> The spiritual objectives are achieved by

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 2,3

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 1

several means: Bible study, clear Gospel services, personal evangelism, counselling and home visits to the unchurched and problem children.

A local situation. In 1947, the Salvation Army in Marion, Ohio, felt the need of a youth program for the summer months. Many problems were encountered such as finance, labor, program and personnel but the challenge of boys and girls who were playing along railroad tracks, sidewalks of downtown sections and alleys, helped in creating and promoting an interest in the minds of the citizens of the community. For five years the program has been in progress and has been financed by the local Community Chest, the Salvation Army Advisory Board, being made up of townspeople, and Army personnel.

A parking lot in the back of the Salvation Army building was transformed into a play area, supplied with swings, seesaws, a slide, sandbox and facilities for badminton, shuffleboard, ping-pong, and basketball. An oven for weiner roasts and tables and benches were provided.

Program. The summer program for the past five years has consisted of approximately twelve weeks of supervised play each year, including a two-week Daily Vacation Bible School program. Daily programs include craft classes, Bible Hour, music, nature study, dramatics, tours, outings, and special events along with the games and recreational facili-

ties of the playground. The membership for the summer of 1951 was approximately two hundred with 10,178 total attendance for the season.

Aim. As stated in the 1949 Annual Report of the Marion Corps, the primary purpose of the playground program is character building, and reaching the children spiritually. The Bible Story Hour held every morning provides an opportunity to point the boys and girls to the better things of life, to instill within them the highest and finest ideals, and to promote faith and the desire for a personal relationship to God.<sup>14</sup> It is stated further:

We of the Salvation Army feel that providing wholesome recreation and entertainment for our youth, proper outlets for energies, and spiritual guidance, not only are a preventative against juvenile delinquency but are essentials in building a youth strong for the tasks of tomorrow.<sup>15</sup>

### III. THE CHURCH

The church has been slow in realizing its opportunity in reaching the children during the summer months. It has recognized that the Vacation Bible School is meeting the need to a limited extent, but now it is clear that the church could easily pattern a playground program after the Salvation Army program.

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<sup>14</sup> Annual Report, 1949, The Salvation Army, Marion, Ohio.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The church has a large and extensive general recreation program and many books and articles have been written concerning the relationship of the church to recreation. However, investigation reveals no record found of any evangelical, Protestant church which sponsors a daily, supervised playground program for the summer months.

The National Recreation Association has not made any survey of playgrounds affiliated with the local church nor has it prepared any listing of churches which sponsor playgrounds.<sup>16</sup>

The General Board of Education of the Methodist Church has published a booklet by E. O. Harbin entitled A Pastor Believes in Recreation<sup>17</sup> in which a true story is related of a typical three point circuit with a pastor who believed in recreation. This booklet gives a summary of how a recreation program, including a playground program, was developed in a local church situation. The churches were actually about to be closed at the time of the coming of the new pastor. It is made plain that other things beside the recreation program happened under the leadership of this new minister. He was a preacher of no mean ability and his messages were simple,

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<sup>16</sup> Musselman, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> E. O. Harbin, A Pastor Believes in Recreation (Nashville: The General Board of Education of the Methodist Church, n.d.), pp. 1 ff

direct and earnest. They made plain the "unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus." Lives were changed; people were converted and the church and Sunday School attendance increased amazingly.

Among the several things planned, such as home parties, recreation for adults, which included the Book Club, Adult Social evenings, and the rumpus room, was the playground built next to one of the churches. One farmer brought in his tractor, plow and harrow. The ground was graded, fertilized, and sodded, the materials, tools and labor being donated. The young people did most of the work. Flowers and hedge were planted along the fence. All the equipment was contributed by individuals and members of the churches and the program grew as the people became interested.

The hours for use were set up as follows: mornings, children; afternoons, intermediates and young people; Friday evening, Church Night, fun and frolic for the entire membership.

This pastor believed in recreation for its physical, moral and spiritual values. He felt that recreation could help greatly in developing a sociable, friendly spirit among his people.

This is an example of what can be done. Our aim includes not only sociability and fellowship but religious education and evangelism in the recreational program. Why

cannot the church set up a playground program comparable to that of the Salvation Army in spiritual emphasis plus meeting the requirements and recommendations of the National Recreation Association?

## CHAPTER IV

### SETTING UP THE PROGRAM

In setting up a playground program in the local church there are many things to be considered. The need and desirability of the playground must be "sold" to the church constituency. The interest and cooperation of the majority of the members is necessary for a successful and growing program.

#### I. ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Committee organization. The first aspect of the program is organization which begins with the formation of a committee. A playground program calls for a more complex organization than that required for occasional events or the formation of special recreation groups such as a Scout troop, junior orchestra or teams for various sports. Paid leadership and a budget for operation necessitates an adequate permanent organization. The playground committee advises with the leaders, adopts regulations governing the use of the playground, helps in the development of a program for its most effective use, establishes a budget for maintenance, secures a competent leader, and keeps the church informed as to the development and growth of the program. This committee may consist of interested and enthusiastic laymen, with the director of religious education, the superintendent of the

Sunday School and the pastor, who is the final authority on all church affairs.

Before attempting to build the program it is necessary to conduct a careful survey to discover needs. This survey should disclose (1) the existing recreational agencies in the community; (2) the needs of the children, and (3) the physical equipment of the church plant and facilities at hand.<sup>1</sup> The committee should also take into consideration the recreational programs in the home, school and community, thus avoiding useless duplication and unnecessary expense.

Planning the playground area. Each playground presents a peculiar and individual problem in design, and the effectiveness of the solution depends upon the ability of the designer to plan the area intelligently so as to achieve the maximum of playground service and at the same time present the most attractive appearance at reasonable maintenance cost.<sup>2</sup> Those facilities that are well designed, suitably placed, and carefully maintained add to the usefulness of church property without detracting from its appearance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warren T. Powell, Recreation in Church and Community (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1938), p. 57

<sup>2</sup> George D. Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1938), p. 13

<sup>3</sup> Recreation and the Church, National Recreation Association (New York: National Recreation Association, 1946), p. 60



George Butler of the National Recreation Association states that there are certain factors to be considered and objectives to be sought in planning the design of a recreation area, and he suggests the following:

1. Effective use of the entire area. Every part of the property should have a definite function and contribute to either its utility or its beauty, or both.
2. Location and arrangement of the areas and facilities. Major or primary features are planned first; minor or incidental features receive secondary consideration.
3. Adequate space for the facilities. To assure safety and satisfactory play, equipment, game courts, playing fields and other features must be allowed ample space.
4. Ease of supervision or operation. Some features require constant supervision; others little. This fact is important in designing an area.
5. Accessibility and relationship of various features. Sections serving small children are located near the entrance or on the side nearest the children's homes.
6. Utilization of natural features. A grove of trees for a picnic area or a large, level, open space for an athletic field.
7. Safety. On the playground this may be secured by careful arrangement of apparatus and game courts.
8. Economy in construction. Through careful planning, expensive operations like grading and drainage may be reduced to a minimum.
9. Economy in maintenance. Maintenance costs often bear direct relation to construction costs; a small addition to the latter through the use of better materials may result in considerable saving in maintenance.
10. Convenience of people using area. Toilet facilities, drinking fountains, seating accommodations are essential service features.

11. Appearance. Every recreation area should present a pleasing appearance from within and without, even though little space can be made available for plantings. This is achieved through proper architecture and landscape design.<sup>4</sup>

In relating these factors to a local church program, it is found that most of them apply, even in a very limited area. The National Recreation Association suggests in the booklet, Recreation and the Church, that if there are shade trees on the property, a few pieces of playground apparatus such as a low swing or slide, horizontal bar, or seesaw may be installed under them. A sandbox is an ever popular feature and can readily be homemade. It is suggested further that unless the apparatus is some distance from the street, it may be well to erect a low fence or plant a hedge to serve as an enclosure.<sup>5</sup>

Facilities and apparatus. Facilities alone do not assure the success of a program, but most activities cannot be carried on satisfactorily without adequate equipment and facilities. The needs and resources of the individual church vary widely and the playground should be planned specifically to meet these needs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> George D. Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1949), p. 168

<sup>5</sup> Recreation and the Church, op. cit., p. 60

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 61

The most important value of apparatus is that it provides opportunity for children's play such as climbing, sliding and balancing. Where the funds are limited and the church is able to buy only a limited number of pieces, it is advisable to select apparatus which will accomodate the largest number. The age of the majority of children using a given playground is a factor in determining the selection of apparatus. The Committee on Standards in Playground Apparatus appointed by the National Recreation Association and consisting of a number of recreation executives, recommended a list of apparatus as the minimum standard for the average playground. In doing this, the committee recognized the fact that it is often necessary to adapt the standard to meet local conditions and special needs. It prescribed:

For pre-school age children (under six years)  
Chair swings; sand-box; small slide; simple low climbing device.

For children of elementary school age (six to twelve years and older) Swings-frame, 12 feet high; slide, eight feet high; horizontal ladder; traveling rings or giant stride; balance beam; seesaws.

Optional - if available funds, space and attendance.  
Horizontal bar; giant stride or traveling rings; low climbing device.<sup>7</sup>

Leadership. The objectives of a church sponsored playground program can be attained only through the use of

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<sup>7</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., p. 16

a qualified leader or director. In churches which employ a Director of Religious Education, this person usually devotes a part of her time to the recreation program. However, the summer playground program requires a full-time director who devotes three months to this position.

The National Recreation Association outlines certain personal qualifications of the playground director. They include:

1. A pleasing personality.
2. A spirit of cooperation.
3. Imagination and initiative.
4. Ability to deal with groups.
5. Reliability.
6. Sincerity and personal integrity.
7. High idealism.
8. Patience and capacity for persistent effort.
9. Enthusiasm and youthful spirit.
10. Personal experience of the joy of self-expression and achievement through play.
11. Strong belief in the value of what he is doing and an appreciation of the needs.
12. A sense of humor.<sup>8</sup>

Powell lists personal qualification for a recreational leader in the church, stating that the director should be (1) preferably a young person. He will have greater sympathy for youth and understanding of youth's problems; (2) knowledge of the general field of recreation; (3) a broad social point of view; interest in welfare of children and young people; and (4) he should be spiritual. The selection of recreational

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<sup>8</sup> Recreation and the Church, op. cit., pp. 42, 43

leaders should be made with meticulous care. Probably no person is so widely emulated by boys and girls as the one who supervises them in their play activities. Consequently, this person must be one of refinement and Christian character. Certainly in the field of church recreation, where it is hoped that character is constantly being influenced for good, only the best can be considered for playground leadership. The leader must be of the type that will first of all fit in with the spiritual purposes of the church, which must be primary. There can be no lessening of emphasis upon these ideals for the sake of promotion of recreation. (5) He must possess great enthusiasm, patience, courtesy, a sense of humor, tact and a cheerful disposition. Among other essential qualities is executive ability, radiant health and vitality, constructive imagination and the capacity to grow with work. He states that being friendly with the child is an essential condition of good discipline and social training.<sup>9</sup>

The director of the playground program should be one trained in religious education as well as in the principles of recreation. To realize the aim of leading boys and girls to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, necessitates that the leader must have experienced Christ as Savior and Lord.

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<sup>9</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 111

A college student or one training for advanced work in the field of religious education, would have minimum qualifications for this sort of opportunity of working and playing with children.

Even the smallest one-room church, if fortunate enough to have good leadership, can serve as a center for the social and recreational life of the whole community on a truly Christian basis.<sup>10</sup>

A good playground. If the church is planning a playground program, it should attempt to meet the highest possible standards within its means. Such standards have been set by playground authorities. (1) There must be room enough on the playground for all the children in the neighborhood, without crowding or long periods of waiting. (2) It must be a pleasant place to play, attractive, orderly and well planned. It must be in striking contrast to the street, a place where a mother can enjoy sitting for an hour or so watching her child at play in the sandbox. (3) It must be so located that boys and girls can "let off steam" and use their energy without repression by, or annoyance to their elders. (4) On it each age is given a chance to play, due to wise planning and leadership. There are features for children of all

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<sup>10</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 108

ages. (5) It must provide for girls an equal chance with boys. Through provision of special features, careful scheduling of the use of existing features and the planning of activities which strongly appeal, the playground provides girls with their share of consideration and service. (6) It should call for the development of a variety of skills. Children learn and become proficient in doing things such as crafts, team games and individual sports. (7) It must be so organized that all kinds and degrees of ability are recognized. Those who have an ambition to excel may satisfy it, but those who do not have ability are encouraged to develop it. (8) Its variety of interests should afford opportunities for expression. (9) It is a social center where new acquaintances are made. Under the wise leader, bashfulness and timidity are often overcome. (10) Its facilities provide opportunities for service for children. It affords valuable leadership training. (11) Fair play is a basic rule. Obedience to rules, courtesy, self-control, are all practiced on the playground. (12) There must be always something interesting to do. There are quiet games and puzzles for rainy or hot days, apparatus for climbing, games like horseshoes or paddle tennis to play with one or two people, team games, special events to prepare for, or stories to listen to. (13) Safety must be a prime consideration so that children may have a good time, with a minimum danger of being hurt. The well

conducted playground is a safe playground. (14) Attention is given to health. Over-exertion, unwise competition and unsanitary habits and conditions are not permitted. (15) There is equality of opportunity, every child having opportunity for a happy, satisfying play activity. (16) It is a rendezvous for families and groups where they may play together.<sup>11</sup> Butler states that:

The ideal playground is a place where children have a chance to enjoy themselves completely, where they may take part in the many activities which appeal to them and which for the most part, cannot be carried on elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

There are specific functions of the playground as named by Butler:

1. A variety of physical activities which are essential to the sound bodily growth and development of physical skills on the part of the individual boy or girl. Such activities are apparatus play, games, stunts and individual physical activities.

2. The team games and sports which, of the various types of physical education activities, educational and medical authorities agree afford the best type of exercise both in respect to physiological effects, and to the possibility of a constructive contribution to the formation of social qualities.

3. Non-physical activities such as arts and crafts, dramatics, nature and music, are among the most popular playground activities.

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., pp. 2-4

<sup>12</sup> Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, op. cit., p. 267



4. The informal, individual types of activity which the child enjoys, such as play in the sandbox, the swing, and the sections of the playground not designated for any specific purpose but available for free play.

5. The enjoyment of beauty, as made possible by trees, vines, shrubs, flowers, well designed structures and facilities. Benches at suitable locations contribute to this function of the playground.<sup>13</sup>

This list does not include the religious education program which is the primary and over-all function of the church sponsored playground program. This should include every participant in the daily program and should permeate in- to every type of activity.

## II. SETTING UP THE PROGRAM

General principles. In planning the program for the playground, a basic principle is that it must be adapted to the conditions and needs of its patrons. Since there is a great difference between playgrounds as to location, space, leaders and children in different communities, no standardized program can be presented which will be suitable for every local situation.<sup>14</sup> Financial resources, available facilities and church location all have a bearing on the organization and set-up of the program. The program should be arranged so that

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<sup>13</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., pp. 9,10

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 138

it will contribute to the individual's health -- physical, mental, social and spiritual.<sup>15</sup>

According to Butler, there are several important factors in program planning which must be considered. They include: (1) Interest -- The desires and interests of the children to be served; (2) Age -- There is a variation in recreation interests at different ages; (3) Sex -- Differences in the two sexes influence their interests and participation in many forms of recreation. However, differences in the playground activities of boys and girls, largely the result of social attitudes, environment, education, and tradition, have been decreased markedly during the past generation; (4) Place -- The suitability of a particular place for the activities carried on is an important factor in determining their success; (5) Skill -- Selection or adaptation of activities to the skill or ability of the children who are to take part in them; (6) Time -- Time for opening, time span for certain activities, hours daily; (7) Size of group -- The interests of the largest possible number of people must be served and emphasis laid on activities and events which have wide appeal and benefit many. Small groups must not be overlooked, however; (8) Type of organization -- Some activities take more organization than others; (9) Type of community -- Nationality, race, occupation, education, economic status and standard of living are factors in planning a

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<sup>15</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 57

recreation program for the people of a city or community;

(10) Purpose -- To help individuals gain the greatest satisfaction, joy, and benefit from their use of leisure time. The recreation leader must know how to utilize activities to contribute to the attainment of this objective. (11) Leadership and funds available; (12) Other local recreational programs.<sup>16</sup>

One of the main principles in planning is variety. The program which presents the largest variety will make the largest appeal.<sup>17</sup> Since boys and girls varying widely in ages and interests are usually present on the playground, several activities should be going on simultaneously. There are two extremes in program planning. One is to provide so few events and activities that many children find little or nothing to attract them or retain their interest. This causes attendance to dwindle. The other is a program which is so full and varied with so many featured events that the playground schedule is crowded. As a rule, children enjoy participating wholeheartedly in a few activities.<sup>18</sup>

Types of programs. In general, playground programs

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<sup>16</sup> Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, op. cit., pp. 232 ff

<sup>17</sup> Powell, op. cit., p. 65

<sup>18</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., p. 148

can be classified into three groups or types -- daily, weekly, and seasonal. In the daily type of program the hours at which various activities will be carried on each day are indicated. Since certain activities are not conducted every day but are scheduled for one or more times a week, a weekly program is required. Also, if there are various types of activities for only once during the summer, special featured events, the preparation of a program for the entire season is necessary.<sup>19</sup> To make possible the meeting of all the needs of the boys and girls, these programs should be worked out in advance.

Daily program. The playground day is divided into periods set aside for different kinds of activities for the various groups. By following the same general schedule day after day, children learn the time of the activities which are of special interest to them. The opening period in the morning is usually one of preparation and informal activity. The midmorning hours are well suited to strenuous activities. The periods before and after lunch are usually devoted to relatively quiet forms of play and to group activities such as crafts and nature study. Tournaments, special events and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 149

various other features are often scheduled for the middle of the afternoon.<sup>20</sup>

In the large civic-sponsored playground programs there are various activities for the different age groups in progress simultaneously. However, in the smaller scale group of the church, with only one leader, the program is usually for all ages, since there is not as great a variety in age or in interest. If the interest is lacking on the part of either extreme in age range, a separate program can easily be promoted for a short length of time by an assistant or helper.

The daily program for the local church program would begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 5:30 p.m.

| <u>Time</u>   | <u>Activity</u>                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 9:00          | Opening                               |
| 9:00 - 10:00  | Preparation for the day               |
|               | Free Play                             |
| 10:00 - 11:00 | Organized games, led by the director. |
| 11:00 - 12:00 | Happy Hour (Bible hour)               |
| 12:00 - 1:30  | Playground closed                     |
| 1:30 - 2:30   | Handcraft                             |
| 2:30 - 4:30   | Team games                            |
|               | Special events                        |
|               | Outings, Tours                        |
| 4:30 - 5:30   | Story Hour                            |
|               | Free Play                             |

It is suggested that the playground be open on two evenings of each week. One evening may be devoted to young people and one evening may be designated as "Family Night."

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<sup>20</sup> Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, op. cit., p. 279

Prayer meeting night should be scheduled on the program as a reminder to children, young people and adults. This may serve as an advertisement and increase the interest in prayer meeting as the programs are distributed to the children and are carried into the home.

It is important that the facilities of the playground be made available to the older young people. The program may be enlarged as the interest grows and the playground becomes increasingly popular as the recreational center for the summer months. "Family Night" provides an opportunity to gain the interest of unchurched families whose children attend the daily program. It also tends to unite the family as a unit as they play and have fellowship together under church auspices.

Weekly program. Because of the diversity of interests and activities on the playground and the limited church playground staff, it is impossible for all activities to be carried on each day. A weekly program is therefore needed to supplement the daily program. It indicates the days for which story telling, drama, nature study and other activities which are scheduled two or three times are scheduled. It is best to schedule the special features such as team games, tournaments, etc., for the same day of each week, so that the children will know how to plan their time. "Family" and

"Youth" nights should be scheduled weekly for a certain night.

For the creation of interest, weekly programs may be planned around one theme, with games, handwork, crafts, drama, and other activities related to that particular theme. The following themes are suggested: Safety, Health, Patriotism, Music or Missions. The weekly theme idea may also be used in the Bible Hour. The weekly program is suggested in the chart on page 47.

### III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DEFINED

Free play. Free play is provided for individual children and small groups who use the swings, teeters, sand piles, giant strides, or small play implements such as jumping ropes, bean bags or balls. A certain amount of organization is always needed in free play, to provide for rotation in the use of the equipment.<sup>22</sup>

There has been some criticism of the playground program that there is too much supervision and not enough opportunity for free play. There are many activities in which the children may take part without direct guidance. Many of them include individual competition; others are informal types of individual play and a few include group activity. Butler

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<sup>22</sup> Wilbur P. Bowen, M.S., and Elmer D. Mitchell, A.M., The Theory of Organized Play (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1928), p. 226

WEEKLY PROGRAM

| Hours                | Monday                          | Tuesday                   | Wednesday                   | Thursday                            | Friday             |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 9:00<br>to<br>10:00  | Free<br>Play                    | Free<br>Play              | Free<br>Play                | Free<br>Play                        | Free<br>Play       |
| 10:00<br>to<br>10:00 | Organized<br>Games              | Dramatics                 | Organized<br>Games          | Dramatics                           | Organized<br>Games |
| 11:00<br>to<br>12:00 | HAPPY<br>HOUR                   | HAPPY<br>HOUR             | HAPPY<br>HOUR               | HAPPY<br>HOUR                       | HAPPY<br>HOUR      |
| 12:00<br>to<br>1:30  | P L A Y G R O U N D C L O S E D |                           |                             |                                     |                    |
| 1:30<br>to<br>2:30   | Handcraft                       | Handcraft                 | Handcraft                   | Handcraft                           | Handcraft          |
| 2:30<br>to<br>4:30   | Badminton<br>Tournament         | Doll and<br>Hobby<br>Show | Softball<br>Team<br>Game    | Tour<br>Through<br>Radio<br>Station | Treasure<br>Hunt   |
| 4:30<br>to<br>5:30   | Story<br>Hour                   | Free<br>Play              | Story<br>Hour               | Free<br>Play                        | Free<br>Play       |
| 5:30<br>to<br>7:00   | P L A Y G R O U N D C L O S E D |                           |                             |                                     |                    |
| 7:00<br>to<br>9:30   | Free<br>Play                    | Youth<br>Night            | Prayer<br>Meeting<br>(7:30) | Family<br>Night                     | Free<br>Play       |



states that attendance will increase on the playground where the director encourages the children to take part in self-directing activities among which are:

|                |                         |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Hopscotch      | Quiet games             |
| Badminton      | Darts                   |
| Shuffleboard   | Bean bag games          |
| Apparatus play | Croquet                 |
| Sand play      | Informal games          |
| Horseshoes     | Handball                |
| Table tennis   | Ring toss <sup>23</sup> |

Organized games. The organized games are under the direction of the leader. These include active games and those suggested by the National Recreation Association in the booklet, Recreation and the Church<sup>24</sup> include:

|                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Three Deep            | Prisoner's base |
| Cat and Mouse         | Poison          |
| Fox and Geese         | relays          |
| Drop the handkerchief | tag games       |
| Steal the bacon       | games of skill  |
| Hide and Seek         | Club snatch     |

There are many others which provide a great variety in the summer program.

Happy hour. This is the Bible hour which can be the extension of the Church School program. It is a great opportunity to reach many unchurched children with the gospel, since many will be attending the program who attend no church. Meeting the children day after day is an educational oppor-

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<sup>23</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., p. 133

<sup>24</sup> Recreation and the Church, op. cit., p. 37

tunity and a challenge to the director to make the program interesting and alive, with enough variety to create expectancy and enjoyment. This is an opportunity for transmissive teaching and proclaiming the gospel of Christ to the children of the community. There are various means of conveying the message, some of which are:

|                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Bible stories      | Movies                 |
| Missionary stories | Object lessons         |
| Flannelgraph       | Scripture memorization |
| Film-strip         | Gospel choruses        |

Children should be required to attend the Happy Hour if they use the facilities of the playground. If the Happy Hour is made interesting, this will not be difficult, as the children are attracted by the Gospel when it is presented on their level of understanding and is directed to them.

Handcraft. Since the beginning of the playground movement, crafts have been included in the program. These crafts are almost limitless in variety, widely different media being used to produce an equally varied list of objects.<sup>25</sup> On the civic sponsored playground work in handcraft is usually carried on in the playground building or on the porch. In a church program, the work could be done in a Sunday School room, or preferably out of doors on tables and benches set

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<sup>25</sup> Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, op. cit., p. 330

up in the shade.

Tools and supplies are furnished by the playground committee and their number and type vary with the funds available, number of children to be served, and the projects to be undertaken. Many times salvaged materials can be used such as rags to be made into pot holders, table mats and woven rugs; cardboard boxes, to be made into wastepaper baskets and letter files; wooden boxes for the making of doorstops, cutout animals, doll houses and furniture. Boys and girls can make games which contribute to the enjoyment of the playground such as checkers, ringtoss games, puzzles and softball bases.<sup>26</sup>

The following are only a few typical examples of arts and crafts activities, suggested by the National Recreation Association:<sup>27</sup>

|                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Basketry               | Painting                  |
| Bead work              | Paper craft               |
| Book binding           | Paper folding and cutting |
| Cardboard construction | Poster making             |
| Carving, wood, soap    | Pottery                   |
| Cellophane craft       | Printing                  |
| Crayonxing             | Reed and raffia           |
| Drawing                | Sand craft                |
| Embroidery             | Sculpture                 |
| Knitting               | Sewing                    |
| Leathercraft           | Sketching                 |
| Making scrapbooks      | Toy making                |
| Modeling               | Weaving                   |
| Needlework             | Woodworking               |

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 331

<sup>27</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., pp. 121, 122

Organized teams and sports. Organized teams create interest by competition. They serve to help boys and girls develop skill in games and sports and provide them training in sportsmanship through experience in competition. Through organization, a greater opportunity is afforded for large numbers of individuals to play regularly with individuals of similar ability, whether they are inept or players of high rank.<sup>28</sup>

A list of competitive games prepared by the Division of Neighborhood Centers of the District of Columbia Recreation Department was derived from the summer activities which were organized and carried on during 1947.<sup>29</sup> They may be adapted by the small playground:

For Boys

Archery  
Badminton  
Basketball  
Croquet  
Dodge Ball  
Handball  
Horseshoes  
Paddle tennis  
Quoits  
Shuffleboard  
Softball  
Table tennis  
Tennis  
Volley ball

For Girls

Archery  
Badminton  
Croquet  
Dodge Ball  
Quoits  
Shuffleboard  
Softball  
Table tennis  
Volley ball

Enjoyment in the activity, the development of sportsmanship and the acquisition of game skills are major objectives

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<sup>28</sup> Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, op. cit., p. 341

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 349

rather than the winning of championships.<sup>30</sup>

Special events. Authorities consider that the special events are in a supplementary relation to the regular routine activities. A limited number of these add interest to the program, they attract parents and others to the program and they also provide an incentive for some of the routine activities. Some children who have not been attracted by the day-by-day activities may be drawn to the playground and introduced to the program by the special events. These events are scheduled for the same time each week, usually in mid-afternoon and are of greater interest if they include child participation. Butler<sup>31</sup> gives a list of such events:

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Picnics                   | Doll show              |
| Trips to parks, zoo,      | Hobby show             |
| industry or historical    | Progressive game party |
| places                    | Treasure hunt          |
| Pet show                  | Movies                 |
| Doll buggy parade         | Patriotic celebration  |
| Fashion show              | Doll fashion show      |
| Costume show              | Hike                   |
| Nature hike               | Nature treasure hunt   |
| Puppet show               | Nature exhibit         |
| Stunt afternoon           | Wiener roast           |
| Mother and daughter party | Campfire program       |
| Father and son party      | Scavenger hunt         |
| Handcraft exhibit         | Popcorn pop            |
| Model airplane day        | Watermelon feed        |
| Skating party             | Ice cream freeze       |
| Amateur hour              | Gypsy party            |

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 348

<sup>31</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., p. 134

Drama. Dramatics play a large role in the program of the city-wide playground, but for the local church, they consist simply of simple, spontaneous forms of drama such as dressing up, playing house or acting out Bible stories. Children enjoy expressing themselves through such means and dramatics can become a method of teaching, particularly in relation to Bible stories. In addition, simple children's plays and pantomimes may be ordered from denominational publishing houses suitable for presentation on "Family Night" or for other groups of children on the playground.

Nature. Many city children are limited in opportunity for the enjoyment of nature even though the public school is endeavoring to make the most of its opportunity in the teaching of the natural sciences. Playgrounds rightly situated may offer an excellent opportunity for the children to become acquainted with nature. If the playground is in an appropriate natural setting, children can be made to appreciate and love natural beauty and be taught the art of observing growing things and the importance of conservation. The nature study can be related to the religious education program by reference to the Creator of the world.

Music. This field is limited on the playground except for singing in the Bible hour. However, a program may be developed in which elementary training may be given

to a small choir. Toy and rhythm bands appeal to early childhood and afford an opportunity for children to perform before their parents when a limited amount of skill is attained.

Story hour. This can be made one of the most enjoyable and valuable periods of the program. It can be used to advantage in the religious education program by using moral stories with a Christian emphasis. The "Susie and Johnny" stories published by Scripture Press and adventure stories by Ken Anderson are suitable.

"Youth Night." Young people, as well as children, are interested in the playground. At least one night during the week should be devoted to their interests, with a specially planned program. The playground could be open to them on evenings when it is not in use by other groups, as a meeting place for free play and fellowship. The youth program could consist of free play, team games and special parties, closing with a brief devotional period.

"Family Night." This is an opportunity for the parents of the children to get a glimpse of the playground program and to enjoy the facilities themselves. Special events may be scheduled with displays of the work and projects on the playground and entertainment by the children.

Other aspects of the program. There are several

other basic considerations in planning a playground program, including such matters as safety and discipline.

Safety. The most effective step toward having a safe playground is to have it well-organized. The children must learn from their first contact with the playground that they must keep the rules in order to insure their own safety as well as that of others.<sup>32</sup>

Butler suggests the following means of assuring safety on the playground:

1. Lay out the playground wisely, with proper locations for the various sections and features, with adequate space for each, with fences, entrances, and paths so placed as to reduce hazards. If these conditions do not obtain, the playground needs to be redesigned.
2. Install only equipment and apparatus that is well constructed and safe for use by the children.
3. Assure proper use of the apparatus by teaching correct methods of use and insisting that they be followed. Prohibit all misuse of equipment.
4. Inspect regularly and thoroughly all apparatus and equipment and withdraw it from use immediately when it gives evidence of needing repairs.
5. Prepare and enforce simple rules for the use of game areas. Restrict the playing of games such as horseshoes or the batting of balls to areas set aside for them.
6. Eliminate all hazards such as exposed pipes, unprotected window wells, and poor surfacing, especially under the apparatus.

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen H. Mahoney, "Playing Safe" Recreation, April, 1950



7. Be vigilant in enforcing safety rules and in preventing dangerous practices, and enlist the cooperation of children, perhaps through the organization of a junior safety corps.<sup>33</sup>

The competent play leader must always be alert to her responsibilities. These responsibilities include: (1) diligent attention to the supervision of the grounds, the apparatus and activities; (2) educating the children themselves to use care and discretion at play. Despite all precautions, accidents will occur and the person in charge must assume the responsibility of proper care of the injured child. It has been noted that parents judge the playground by the method in which the children are cared for under such circumstances. Mahoney<sup>34</sup> suggests that when accidents occur, the director should

1. Know where and how to summon an ambulance.
2. Be familiar with the treatment of simple injuries.
3. Have a first-aid kit ready for emergencies.
4. Escort the injured child home, if possible, or send some responsible person to represent you.

Discipline and rules. The playground should be a place where all are permitted the greatest possible freedom in the use of facilities and in the choice of activities, provided such freedom does not interfere with the best in-

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<sup>33</sup> Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, op. cit., p. 282

<sup>34</sup> Mahoney, op. cit.,

terests of the entire group.<sup>35</sup> There is the least occasion for disciplining when there is the greatest amount of interesting activity. The playground director who understands child nature and used tact in dealing with children will not have any great difficulty in maintaining order on the playground. She must be calm and avoid any suggestion that she is expecting trouble. Children respect a leader who does not overlook any misconduct but is fair in her treatment of merited punishment.

Proper conduct may be assured by: (1) providing a varied program appealing to all who attend the playground; (2) having a few concise rules, conspicuously posted, and enforcing them. It is important that this be done at the very beginning of the season because if the right standard is maintained in the beginning, there will be little difficulty later on. (3) Keeping an eye on all parts of the playground; (4) letting the children help make the rules. They are more willing to conform if they are consulted. (5) Always maintaining a spirit of fairness and justice in dealing with the children; (6) learning all of the facts before dealing out the punishment. (7) Corporal punishment

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<sup>35</sup> Butler, Playgrounds, Their Administration and Operation, op. cit., p. 349

and the handling of children in a rough manner should not be permitted; (8) enforcing rulings and making no threats or promises which are not carried out; (9) using a whistle as an aid in maintaining discipline; (10) sometimes letting the children settle minor difficulties among themselves.<sup>36</sup>

Program must be definite but flexible. It is obvious that definite planning in advance of the opening of the playground is necessary. Definite hours for certain activities is advisable but the program must be flexible because the children are not under compulsion and they come to the playground through choice for enjoyment. If, as the season advances, experience indicates that certain features should be omitted or more or less time be devoted to them, the schedule should be revised accordingly.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 350-352

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 139

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary. The Christian church has an unlimited possibility in the development of playgrounds. All authorities agree that children need supervised recreation and for many years cities and communities have sponsored playgrounds which have helped in the prevention of juvenile delinquency and have contributed to character building and social uplift. The church has long sponsored a recreation program for fellowship, which may be lacking in any definite spiritual emphasis. The Daily Vacation Bible School has contributed to the program of the church for it's children, but for too short a time each summer. The church sponsored playground program meets the need of children for play along with character building and providing for spiritual needs.

The playground program is familiar to all and most large cities and towns are highly organized and maintain an effective year-round program. The Salvation Army has the most highly developed religious playground program, but the church has not yet realized the possibilities which this organization has discovered to be so effective a means for evangelization.

This study has resulted in the presentation of a suggested program for a playground sponsored by the local church. This includes the problem of organization and

administration, the qualifications for a playground plant, principles of program building, suggested daily and weekly programs. The program and related activities are described.

The success of the playground depends almost entirely upon the director who must maintain and promote the type of program which will conduce to the desired end of winning boys and girls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion. The playground program, when sponsored by the local church, has untold possibilities for reaching all the membership of the church from the beginner to the oldest member. The program meets the play needs of boys and girls through sports and games. It develops initiative and satisfies the creative urge through the handicraft activities. It meets the spiritual needs of the child through teaching by example and precept. The daily contact with spiritual leaders is an incentive to the boys and girls to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Not only are the children of the church included in the program but it extends to the unchurched children who also are privileged to enjoy the facilities of the playground.

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<sup>1</sup> II Peter 3:18

The program of playground evangelism reaches the families of these children, as has been proved at the Salvation Army in Marion, Ohio, where entire families have been brought into the church and into the Kingdom.

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